



Research Resources

Child Sex Trafficking Team
Office of the Texas Governor



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June 2019

Child Sex Trafficking Team

The Texas Legislature authorized the creation of the Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) in the Governor's Office to provide a collaborative and comprehensive response to child sexual exploitation in Texas. Texas Government Code §§ 772.0062 – 772.0063. CSTT's vision is a state where children and youth are free from sexual exploitation. Our mission is to build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, and create new and leverage existing collaborations to prevent child sexual exploitation, to help survivors heal and thrive, and to bring exploiters to justice.

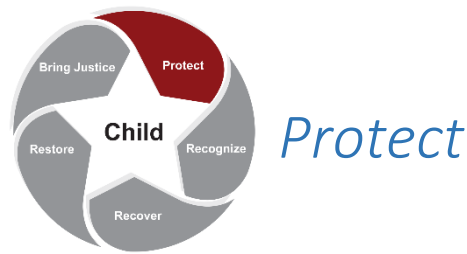


In order to enhance expertise in our state and to meet our legislative charge to collect, analyze and distribute relevant research to agencies and nonprofit organizations, CSTT gathers existing and funds new relevant research on child sex trafficking, funds evaluations of emerging and innovative child sex trafficking programs, provides training on research and evaluation findings, and provides this document, *Research Resources*, on our website, <https://gov.texas.gov/CSTT>. *Research Resources* is a curated list of relevant research articles, complete with summaries by CSTT, from the last three to five years. The articles are primarily from peer-reviewed journals and are organized by CSTT's five overarching goals: protect, recognize, rescue, restore, and bring justice. (Some articles overlap more than one of the five areas but appear in only one section.)

CSTT will continuously update and improve this collection of research by gathering, curating, summarizing and providing the latest research in updated versions of *Research Resources*. Enhancing expertise in our state will empower Texas to implement research-based programs and practices that prevent child sexual exploitation, help survivors heal and thrive, and bring exploiters to justice.

Our mission is to build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, and create new and leverage existing collaborations to:

- [Protect](#) children by building their awareness of and resilience to child exploitation and by curbing demand for child sex trafficking.
- [Recognize](#) child sexual exploitation in all its forms by raising public awareness and implementing screening tools for victims.
- [Recover](#) victims with protective and empowering – not punitive – collaborative and coordinated responses spanning multiple systems.
- [Restore](#) survivors through trauma-informed and responsive services and supports they need to heal and thrive.
- [Bring justice](#) for survivors by holding traffickers, buyers, and those who profit from trafficking accountable.



A supportive adult may be the difference in homeless youth not being trafficked

Author(s): Chisolm-Straker, Makini, Jeremy Sze, Julia Einbond, James White, and Hanni Stoklosa
Publication year: 2018

Summary: “This study shows that homeless teens with a supportive adult in their life may have lower odds of being exploited through trafficking.”

Abstract: Research was conducted using data collected from homeless youth served by Covenant House New Jersey between November 2015 and February 2017. From this sample, 9.6% of those youth had experienced trafficking at some point in their lives. Using the sample, the researchers set out to study the potential differences in factors that may prevent homeless youth from being trafficked. When the presence of a supportive adult was the only factor associated with the potential of being trafficked, the data analysis revealed that such a presence was not a statistically significant factor in reducing the odds of a homeless youth being trafficked. However, according to their multivariable model and analysis, the presence of a supportive adult in the life of a homeless youth can lower the odds of being trafficked (0.345). It is important to recognize that between these two models, the presence of a supportive adult is statistically significant when other factors are also being compared across the two groups (those who experienced trafficking and those who did not). Furthermore, the researchers acknowledge that their study is limited in its application to other populations and call for future research into the area of protective factors for homeless youth on a more generalizable scale.

Youth Experiences Survey (YES): Exploring the Scope and Complexity of Sex Trafficking in a Sample of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Author(s): Middleton, Jennifer S., Maurice N. Gattis, Laura M. Frey, and Dominique Roe-Sepowitz
Publication year: 2018

Summary: “Homeless youth are at a higher risk of sexual exploitation than their peers. This sample of homeless youth in a region covering parts of both Kentucky and Indiana further illustrates that homeless youth who have experienced sex trafficking also report higher rates of sexual abuse as a child, substance abuse, mental health concerns, self-harm practices, and other negative factors that may either be a consequence of or a contributing factor to their sexual exploitation.”

Abstract: A convenience survey (an easily accessed grouping) of homeless youth seeking services from various shelters in the Kentucky and Indiana region (known as “Kentuckiana”) reported that roughly 41% of homeless youths were victims of sex trafficking. Among all homeless youth surveyed, those who were identified as victims were more likely to report previous physically dangerous behaviors, such as self-harming actions, suicide attempts, and substance abuse. It is unclear if these factors primarily contributed to the likelihood of sexual exploitation or if the behaviors developed after exploitation as a coping

mechanism; this is not addressed in the research. Included in the study is a comprehensive list of various statistics associated with those surveyed, broken down into categories for easy access. The study indicates that there is an intense need for trauma-informed care approaches that serve males, females and LGBTQ youth. Along with aftercare improvements, there is also a need for stronger prevention and education services, particularly among more vulnerable populations such as homeless youth.

From Absurd and Neglected to Abused and Exploited: The Intersection of the Child Welfare System with the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Author(s): Walker, Kate, and Fiza Quraishi

Publication year: 2014

Summary: “This case study and accompanying analysis with recommendations serves to illustrate how vulnerabilities within the child welfare system can lead to the increased risk of sexual exploitation of children within the system.”

Abstract: While the child welfare system has an overarching goal and purpose to protect children from neglect and abuse, vulnerabilities within the system may increase the risk of sexual exploitation among system children. Children present in the welfare system usually suffer from conditions/experiences that traffickers specifically seek out in potential targets for exploitation. These factors include but not limited to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; feelings of isolation; lack of basic necessities such as food and shelter. It is proposed that firms within the technology sector have an opportunity to assist in strengthening and improving the welfare system by addressing certain aspects of vulnerabilities with the use of technology. Recommendations include creating a central database that can alert welfare staff members to repeated school absences of a child, creating a 24-hour response hotline with a professional advocate or social worker on-call at all times, and creating a screening tool that asks sensitive questions through the use of Interactive Voice Response so children may feel more comfortable giving honest and complete answers. It is further recommended that technology should be utilized to creating limited use or restricted versions of applications that youth may use to communicate via social media while still remaining supervised and protected from potential traffickers online. Also suggested is using social media as a campaigning tool to recruit more foster homes/parents and using technologically based curricula to educate welfare youth on exploitation and recruiting techniques of traffickers. Technology companies can also consider developing a portal to monitor trends and developments of trafficking/exploitation techniques and a portal to catalog providers and services for various welfare-based agencies. Finally, a discrete mobile application should be developed. An application that youth could access on their phones that would provide information on various programs that can help them transition out of a life of sexual exploitation as quickly as possible.

An Exploratory Study of Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the Hospitality Industry in the United States

Author(s): Kalargyrou, Valentini, and Robert Woods

Publication year: 2015

Summary: “Participating in anti-CSEC initiatives, such as signing the ECPAT-USA’s Code of Conduct, can be both morally and financially beneficial to members of the hospitality industry.”

Abstract: “The authors perform several case studies on various US-based hospitality companies that have signed The Code and agreed to participate in the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of children in their industry. The authors conclude that despite initial skepticism that such an action would reflect negatively on a company, the participating companies have received positive feedback from stakeholders and the signing appears to have a financial/business advantage as well. Companies that take an interest in supporting vulnerable populations, appear to gain favor among potential customers. It is further noted that while these efforts are laudable, many members of the industry are not participating. Researchers hope to find a way to increase participation and effectiveness of the current trends and practices in this area. This study examines the phenomena of child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation as well as how the hospitality industry can be proactive in fighting for human rights in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Seven hospitality companies have signed End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT)-USA’s Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, also referred to as The Code. The initiative of seven hospitality companies and the purpose of The Code is to provide awareness and tools to fight against the sexual exploitation of children in the hospitality and tourism contexts. Whether and how to become involved with this movement tests hospitality companies’ approach to strategic CSR. These companies can gain a competitive advantage by creating a safe and socially sustainable environment for their guests, employees and their community, as well as a good reputation by investing in strategic and long-term positive social responsibility activities related to combating child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.”

Bodies are Not Commodities: Examining A21 Curriculum's Impact on Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Advocacy About Anti-Human Trafficking Rights and Issues

Author(s): Scott, Lakia M., Christina Crenshaw, and Elena M. Venegas
Publication year: 2017

Summary: “This study looked at the impact of A21 curriculum’s impact on students and determined that participants walked away with a better understanding of human trafficking and were more engaged with this issue at large.”

Abstract: Using a sample of students from a racially diverse high school in Texas, researchers studied the impact of A21’s curriculum on students’ knowledge, attitudes, and advocacy surrounding anti-trafficking issues. Students were administered a pre- and post-assessment to gauge changes in knowledge level. A focus group was also selected to provide additional insight into attitudes and advocacy of the students following the program. According to these assessments, the researchers have concluded that A21’s curriculum increased students’ knowledge of the issue and positively influenced increased advocacy surrounding the issue among students. For future research, it is suggested that the influence of teachers’ personal attitudes towards the subject of human trafficking be evaluated as well.

Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand by Demand Abolition, Research Report

Publication year: 2018 (by Demand Abolition)

Summary: This commissioned survey of over 8000 adult men focuses on men who buy girls and women and identifies that a small percentage of buyers – frequent buyers – can account for a relatively large part of the market for sex. These frequent buyers have relatively high incomes and an apparent perceived low risk of arrest and low likelihood of prosecution.

Protect

The survey also summarizes several key policy and legislative action items for addressing demand, including increased regulatory action against illicit massage businesses and harsher criminal penalties for buyers. (See page 5.)





The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Thorn Survivor Insights Study

Author(s): Bouché, Vanessa, for THORN (wearethorn.org)

Publication year: 2018

Summary: “The goal of the survey was to determine how technology was changing and impacting Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. Two central themes emerged from survey responses: 1) Technology is playing an increasing role in grooming and controlling victims of DMST and 2) Less familiar forms of DMST, including those trafficked by family members or without a clear trafficker, emerged, however common across all types of DMST, are accounts of child abuse and neglect.”

Abstract: “This survey interviewed 260 survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking from 14 states. 98% identified as female, 2% as male, and 1% as other. Respondents had a range of trafficking experiences including: familial, non-familial, or no trafficker. Those who entered the life before the age of 10, were almost exclusively trafficked by family members, often a father or step-father. Those who entered the life after 11 were mostly likely to be trafficked by strangers. The survey confirmed that many DMST victims experience some type of childhood abuse and neglect. 2 out of 3 participants had experiences with either foster care or juvenile detention. 41% of respondents reported that they had been in foster care. 19% of participants reported not having a trafficker, however it is likely that a trafficker did exist, but many do not characterize themselves as victims and may romanticize their relationship with the trafficker. Less than 25% of respondents have seen their trafficker prosecuted. In order to determine the role technology plays in trafficking, it is necessary to conduct much of the analysis based on the year in which participants entered the life.”

Validation of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) Technical Report

Author(s): Basson, Danna

Publication year: 2017

Summary: “To address the need for early identification, credible prevalence estimates of children who experience CSE, and improved response and protection for exploited youth, WestCoast developed, pilot tested, and validated a screening tool to identify exploited youth. This report describes the development of the screening tool — called the Commercial Sexual Exploitation–Identification Tool (CSE-IT) — and the pilot test results and validity evidence for the CSE-IT.”

Abstract: “Commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S. is recognized as a child welfare, mental health, and public health crisis. Despite growing awareness of the problem, it is poorly understood and difficult to recognize. As a result, 75% of young people who experience commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) endure multiple years of abuse before anyone intervenes. The lack of a standard, validated screening tool for use in settings where vulnerable youth are served severely hampers the ability

of public agencies to identify victims early and provide targeted services. As a result, there are no valid prevalence or incidence rates for youth who are sexually exploited in California or the United States. The resulting tool was piloted in 45 agencies, including 15 child welfare agencies, 6 juvenile justice agencies, and 24 community-based organizations. Two thousand child serving professionals screened 5,537 children and youth age 10 and over. The screening results showed that 635 youth, or 11.5% of the youth that were screened, have clear indicators of exploitation (or a score of Clear Concern on the CSE-IT). This rate differs by service setting, gender identity and expression, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.”

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Health Care Use and Case Characteristics

Author(s): Hornor, Gail, and Jennifer Sherfield

Publication year: 2018

Summary: “Certain factors increase likelihood of a child being commercially sexually exploited. Pediatric healthcare professionals need training to better identify these indicators among patients.”

Abstract: “Although commercial sexual exploitation is not limited to a particular demographic, many factors have been attributed to increasing the likelihood that a child may be exploited. Such factors include mental health issues, substance abuse, living situation, and behaviors/habits of parents. The most important risk factor is believed to be experiencing sexual abuse previously. Healthcare professionals, particularly those within pediatric care, must proactively seek to identify children who are at risk to be or already are experiencing exploitation. One of the best ways to protect children from exploitation is the adaption and utilization of positive parenting techniques that develop and strengthen the parent-child relationship. Pediatric health care providers can and should educate parents on their role in protecting their children from commercial sexual exploitation.”

Sex Trafficking in the U.S.: A Closer Look at U.S. Citizen Victims

Author(s): Polaris

Publication year: 2014

Summary: “It is important to understand that human trafficking is as much a domestic problem within the U.S. as it is an international problem in third world countries. Polaris has created a report that takes a closer look at domestic victims of sex trafficking specifically within the United States.”

Abstract: “Victims of sex trafficking are found all over the United States, but often times the general public is not aware of how prevalent the problem is inside their home country. Particular factors that increase the likelihood of sexual exploitation include (but are not limited to): poverty, homelessness, previous sexual abuse, substance abuse, mental health concerns, domestic violence, runaway, involvement in Child Welfare and/or Juvenile Justice System, child abuse/neglect, and/or other types of trauma. Exploitation may be initiated by a romantic partner, a family member, an employer, or even a complete stranger. Victims often express some kind of emotional attachment to their exploiter, whether than be romantic or a belief that the exploiter is their only source of protection and/or income. Many victims come in contact with healthcare, law enforcement, and/or child welfare professionals during the period of their exploitation. Such front-line professionals should be better trained and prepared to recognize and respond to victims of sex trafficking. The report includes additional statistics about characteristics and experiences of sex trafficking survivors. This is an excellent starting point for source material on the topic of sex trafficking.”

Familial Sex Trafficking of Minors: Trafficking Conditions, Clinical Presentation, and System Involvement

Author(s): Spring, Ginny, and Jennifer Cole

Publication year: 2018

Summary: This research on familial trafficking includes a small sample of families involved in the child protection system and demonstrates the prevalence in that sample of parental use of illicit drugs and high severity of sexual abuse as a part of background issues leading to trafficking.

Abstract: “It is well documented in the literature that child sex trafficking can be perpetrated by family members, though limited research has focused on describing this type of sexual exploitation. This pilot study addresses this gap by providing an analysis of familial sex trafficking considering trafficking dynamics, and rurality. Using a sample of 31 child welfare-involved children referred for behavioral health assessment and treatment, this mixed methods study explores: (1) victim and trafficker characteristics, the trafficking situation, law enforcement classifications of trafficking, clinical profiles of victims, and system involvement of children and youth involved in familial sex trafficking; (2) gender differences in clinical outcomes in sex-trafficked children; and (3) geographical differences in severity of the victimization experience. Major findings document high rates of family members trafficking children for illicit drugs; high severity of abuse as measured with the Sexual Abuse Severity Score, with higher severity of abuse for children living in rural communities; clinical threshold level scores on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC-A). Boys and girls had similar clinical profiles except boys had higher CBCL externalizing scores, and females had higher TSCC depression scores. Additionally, more than half of the children in this sample had attempted suicide in their lifetime. This formative study sheds light on the phenomenon of familial sex trafficking, thereby creating the context for further investigations. Implications for identification and effective responses to familial sex trafficking, with specific attention to gender and geography are discussed.”

"To the Public, Nothing was Wrong with Me": Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas At Risk for Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Author(s): Kellison, B., M. I. M. Torres, M. Kammer-Kerwick, D. Hairston, M. Talley, and N. Busch-Armendariz

Publication year: 2019

Summary: “This study describes child sex trafficking in three regions across Texas using empirically grounded qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is intended to expand the body and depth of knowledge that can help anti-trafficking professionals better identify individuals at risk for, or experiencing, child sex trafficking.” (Kellison, et. al., 8.)

Highlights (pages 8 and 9) No abstract provided in the document.

Sample = 466 youth ages 13-27

- Rio Grande Valley/El Paso: 26%
- Houston: 45%
- Lubbock: 11%
- Additional Texas Juvenile Justice Department population from these areas: 18%

Note: the sample did not include children in foster care or youth identified as aging out of care and represents a snapshot of a readily identifiable population with a specified criterion.

Recognize

- 466 surveys of young people age 13 and 27 had to have experienced at least one of the following four risk factors prior to the age of 18:
 1. A history of emotional or sexual abuse;
 2. A history of homelessness or were currently homeless;
 3. A history of running away from home;
 4. Involvement with the child welfare system or had been assigned a case worker from any agency and/or organization.
- Among at-risk participants, 25% of LGBTQ and 18% of cisgender heterosexual females were victims of sex trafficking.
- Approximately 7% of at-risk cisgender heterosexual males were victims of sex trafficking.
- After their first experience of exploitation, victims of child sex trafficking spend about 35% of their lives in circumstances of exploitation.
- About 33% of victims of sex trafficking in this study were victimized in the past year.
- Of those who have experienced sex trafficking victimization, 83% have also experienced some other form of exploitation.
- The average age of first sex trafficking victimization among study participants was about 15 years old.
- Around 73% of individuals who had experienced sex trafficking also engaged in un-coerced survival sex at some point during their lives.
- About half of individuals who experienced sex trafficking had been forced to participate in commercial sex by a romantic partner.





Commercially sexually exploited youths' health care experiences, barriers, and recommendations: A qualitative analysis

Author(s): Ijadi-Maghsoodi, Roya, Eraka Bath, Mekeila Cook, Lauren Textor, and Elizabeth Barnert
Publication year: 2018

Summary: “Commercially sexually exploited youth face barriers to healthcare access based on their perceptions of healthcare professionals being judgmental and critical. These youth also desire more access to peer-mentors who have experienced the “life” that they know in order to facilitate more meaningful progress in recovery.”

Abstract: “Healthcare needs and accessibility are a major concern among commercially sexually exploited (CSE) youth and those that work with them. Recently, researchers have focused on trying to better understand these needs and potential barriers to access by speaking directly with CSE youth about their experiences. According to the research presented by Roya Ijadi-Maghsoodi, Eraka Bath, Mekeila Cook, Lauren Textor, and Elizabeth Barnert (2018), CSE youth interact with healthcare systems and services frequently, particularly within the realm of reproductive health. Accessibility to these services are not limited by the availability of such clinics, but rather are limited due to CSE youths’ perceptions of the treatment and services rendered. It was identified that the main barriers to access, specifically to reproductive and mental healthcare, include the expectation that healthcare professionals may be judgmental of CSE youth, the service may be of low-quality, personal information may not remain confidential, and CSE youth may be turned in to local authorities if their lifestyle is discovered or suspected. In order to overcome these barriers, the interviewed CSE youth made several recommendations. Recommendations included increasing the usage of peer-mentors, updating and increasing reproductive healthcare education among youth at younger ages, training healthcare professionals to maintain a non-judgmental and non-paternal approach to care of CSE youth, and posting billboards and ads with healthcare contact information in areas frequented by CSE youth.”



[*Uncharted Waters: Developing Mental Health Services for Survivors of Domestic Human Sex Trafficking. Harvard review of psychiatry, 26\(5\), 287-297*](#)

Author(s): Judge, Abigail M.

Publication year: 2018

Summary: The complexity of recovery from sex trafficking requires a holistic and comprehensive approach. The exit and recovery patterns for victims of trafficking must be seen in the whole of the patient's experiences including the context of their childhood. Victimization produces physical, psychological, emotional, and relational challenges. Addressing the whole person using a systems approach not isolated psychological interventions proves beneficial to recovery. This article is very readable and uses vignettes to demonstrate the application of best practices.

Abstract: "In recent years, heightened attention has been paid to commercial sexual exploitation, including domestic human sex trafficking (HST), with mental health concerns named the most dominant health concern among survivors. Human sex trafficking is associated with significant and long-term mental health consequences. Research to date has emphasized ways to identify survivors in health care settings. Once identified, however, few specialized services are available to help survivors exit and recover. The current services infrastructure for HST has been compared to the disjointed social response to intimate partner violence before the women's movement helped develop a system of battered women's shelters. Although research has highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary and interagency response to HST, including mental health care, best practices have not yet been formulated. Furthermore, available services are fragmented across sectors. With psychology and psychiatry taking tentative steps to develop services for HST survivors, this article identifies six principles to help avoid a fragmented and potentially re-traumatizing clinical and systemic response. The overarching goal is to design services that are flexible, accessible, trauma informed, survivor driven, responsive to stages of change, multidisciplinary, and enduring, especially given the centrality of healthy attachments and community in trauma recovery. Principles are derived from the limited available research on HST services and from examples of efficacious interventions for patient groups with similar characteristics. The discussion is also informed by composite clinical vignettes from a specialized clinic for adult survivors of HST, housed in a major teaching hospital. Finally, practice recommendations and strategies for building interdisciplinary collaborations are discussed."

[*Lifelong Wellbeing for Survivors of Sex Trafficking: Collaborative Perspectives From Survivors, Researchers, and Service Providers*](#)

Author(s): Vatne Bintliff, Amy, Christine Stark, Lori DiPrete Brown, and Araceli Alonso

Publication year: 2018

Summary: "This article summarizes a collaborative effort by researchers, service providers, and women who have experienced exploitation and trafficking for sex, to inform policy and practice related to care

for survivors.” Note: This includes women from the United States as well as other countries. (Source: Women’s United Nations Report Network - WUNRN).

Abstract: “This article summarizes a collaborative effort by researchers, service providers, and women who have experienced exploitation and trafficking for sex, to inform policy and practice related to care for survivors. The effort brought together current research program experience from around the world, and survivor perspectives, in a 2015 interactive forum entitled “STREETS of Hope: Listening to and Supporting Survivors of Human Trafficking.” A participatory approach to defining wellbeing, designed especially for use with vulnerable or highly marginalized populations of women and girls, provided the framework for the discussions. In addition, attempts were made to use principles of trauma-informed care during the workshop itself, toward the overall goals of 1) working as equals to inform research agendas; 2) gaining insights from survivors to improve services; and 3) providing survivors and all participants with a wellbeing model that can help them think and speak with specificity and clarity about their personal growth, wellbeing, and self-care. The results of the interactive two-day workshop and subsequent consultations included: 1) increased understandings and more detailed descriptions of what wellbeing is from the lived experience of survivors, and 2) insights about ways that services and care can be more responsive to the needs and preferences of survivors. Further, the collective exercise suggested revisions and specifications to the wellbeing model itself. Finally, the collaborators identified future directions for their shared research and practice. Overall, the experience of the “STREETS of Hope Forum” supports the idea that iterative, equitable, collaborative work with survivors must be employed to inform systems of care, and that a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept of wellbeing can help survivors, researchers, program leaders and policy-makers to foster support and agency throughout the life course. For those who participated, “STREETS of Hope” constituted a reframing of the goals of services care. It enabled us to think beyond basic needs and survival as defined by caregivers, to one that centers the experience of survivors and fosters recognition of and realization of their talents and life aspirations.”

The voices of survivors: An exploration of the contributing factors that assisted with exiting from commercial sexual exploitation in childhood

Author(s): Corbett, Annie

Publication year: 2018

Summary: “Survivors should be more fully utilized as a source of knowledge to improve and inform exit-strategies for those seeking to leave the sex trade industry.”

Abstract: “According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), cases of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) have increased considerably in the United States over the past few years, with over 1.1 million reported cases (ECPATUSA, 2017), particularly in the Northern California San Francisco Bay Area. From a strengths-based trauma-informed perspective, this study explored the factors that assist youth with exiting the life associated with CSEC. The primary research question was, “What can be learned from the lived experiences of women who successfully exited childhood commercial sexual exploitation and perceive themselves to be functioning well despite this history? This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with 13 predominately women of color, average age of 25 (range 21–26), who successfully exited the Life after enduring an average of 4 years (range 1–9). The average age for the group for becoming exploited was 13 (range 8–17), with all exiting during their 17th year. A thematic analysis identified 20 themes organized under three primary categories. The first category, Self-Defined Wellness (4): naming of self-outside the Life, positive family connections, breaking the cycle, and embracing the term survivor. The second, Describing the Life (6): sex for goods, surviving the Game, pimp control, wanting to be loved/look good, contributing family factors, and the

grooming process. The third, Exiting Process (10): naming one who has exited, others depend on me, not profitable to exit, fear keeps you in, thinking about leaving, the role of family, pending motherhood, wanting to be free, sustaining exit, and professional systems not accessed. There were four recommendations from survivors: active listening, encouragement, non-judgment, and don't leave when we push. Two anecdotal themes emerged: treated like garbage by the legal system, and I thought I was grown. The study design uniquely positioned the voices of survivors as experts in relation to expanding knowledge about the exiting process and in offering recommendations for youth-at-risk, family members, and providers. Contributions include underscoring the importance of bearing witness to youths' stories as part of resiliency/recovery and valuing the complexities of family relationships/dynamics in the exiting process. Implications for advocacy, research, and practice are discussed.”





Bring Justice

Policing Human Trafficking: Cultural Blinders and Organizational Barriers

Author(s): Farrell, Amy, and Rebecca Pfeffer

Publication year: 2014

Summary: “Current (as of 2014) law enforcement cultural perceptions of human trafficking are hindering officers from being able to correctly identify and respond to trafficking cases.”

Abstract: “All fifty states have criminalized human trafficking. However, despite large prevalence estimates of human trafficking victims nationwide, relatively few cases of trafficking have been identified, investigated, and prosecuted at the local level. The researchers, through case records and qualitative interviews, found that cultural perceptions about human trafficking both within the police agencies and the society at large hinder officers from being more proactive in identifying and investigating human trafficking cases. At this time the general understanding of trafficking is too narrow and prevents law enforcement from recognizing trafficking in its various forms. Law enforcement is also hesitant to expand resources in areas that the public may not support or believe is worthwhile. The public’s perception of “worth” is also hindered by a too narrow definition of human trafficking. Furthermore, law enforcement is reactive in human trafficking cases, waiting until there is an outcry from a victim or someone who reports suspicious behavior. In order to potentially increase identification and responses to human trafficking situations, both the public and law enforcement must better understand a broader definition of the term “trafficking” and share a desire to combat it in all its forms. Changes in cultural perceptions will also help encourage more proactive law enforcement efforts in regards to trafficking and its victims.”

Gendered Outcomes in Prostitution Arrests in Houston, Texas

Author(s): Pfeffer, Rebecca, Pablo Ormachea, and David Eagleman

Publication year: 2017

Summary: “Research indicates that sentencing in the criminal justice system may be impacted by gender. According to a sample taking from 1977-2010 in the Houston area, women were more likely to be arrested and receive a jail sentence for prostitution than men.”

Abstract: “Research is continuing to suggest that gender plays a large role in hindering the criminal justice system from treating individuals equally before the law. Taking data from Harris County in Texas between the years 1977-2010, the researchers provide statistical evidence that women are more than 2x more likely to be arrested for prostitution related offenses than men. However, men are more likely to receive a fine or probation. Through this evidence and supporting literature, law enforcement is shown to focus much more heavily on the suppliers of commercial sex (“sellers”) than on those who purchase or solicit the sexual activities (“buyers”). According to data, men are more likely to be buyers than sellers, which provides additional insight into why women are more often incarcerated. The researchers



recommend that “enforcement strategies be adjusted to focus more on male participants of prostitution exchanges, particularly among buyers of sex.”

Police perceptions of human trafficking

Author(s): Farrell, Amy, Rebecca Pfeffer, and Katherine Bright

Publication year: 2015

Summary: “Previously-held perceptions by police officers regarding human trafficking and prostitution have hindered law enforcement in its ability to identify and prosecute human trafficking cases correctly. Comparing human trafficking to prostitution cases, which officers are typically more familiar with, can ‘both facilitate and impede human trafficking enforcement.’”

Abstract: “This research sets out to understand how police perceptions about human trafficking influence investigation and response strategies and techniques among law enforcement. 90 law enforcement officials from 12 US counties were extensively interviewed in order to provide data for this project. Through the interviews, researchers concluded that many law enforcement officials struggle to make distinctions between prostitution and human trafficking. Schema theory, or the idea that human beings create “tools for organizing knowledge gained from prior experience,” is applied to better understand law enforcement officers’ reactions, perceptions, and understanding of human trafficking. The majority of officers have extensive experience with prostitution as a crime through both investigation and actual enforcement practices. Therefore, officers oftentimes relied on understandings and techniques associated with the enforcement of prostitution laws when approaching human trafficking. While comparison allowed officers to more fully grasp and embrace human trafficking as a crime to be actively targeted and investigated, it also may negatively impact the ability of officers to create innovative and new ways to approach investigating and responding to trafficking cases. Officers may simply return to old routines they associate with prostitution, rather than respond in a way that is most appropriate for a trafficking case. It may also limit the kinds of information and evidence officers seek to collect or may cause an officer to struggle to view the individual as a “victim” rather than as a “suspect”. If it is not possible to dedicate the necessary time, resources, or education to help officers learn how to appropriately handle human trafficking cases specifically, officers will most likely rely on previously established schema as they attempt to respond to situations. As previously noted, this can provide both temporary, “short-term benefits and long-term dangers” for the enforcement of human trafficking laws at the local level.”

Perceptions of Justice

Author(s): Love, Hanna, Jeanette Hussemann, Lilly Yu, Evelyn McCoy, and Colleen Owens

Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center

Publication year: 2018

Summary: “This brief provides the first glimpse into human trafficking survivors’ experiences with the criminal justice system and perspectives on justice. Although the field needs further research that centers survivors’ voices, our findings offer a step in that direction and point to the need to reform current criminal justice system responses to trafficking cases and develop noncriminal justice alternatives for remedying harm.”

Abstract: “Survivors of human trafficking face many challenges when interacting with the criminal justice system, including misconceptions regarding the nature of their victimization, stigma due to perceived involvement in illegal behavior, and xenophobia. Despite these documented challenges, little is

known about how survivors perceive the justice system or how they would like to achieve justice with regard to their traffickers. This brief fills that gap by asking 80 survivors of human trafficking how they define justice on their own terms. Less than a quarter of respondents endorsed traditional criminal justice remedies, such as incarceration. Instead, most felt justice could be better achieved through prevention.”

Assessing the Impact of State Human Trafficking Legislation on Criminal Justice System Outcomes

Authors(s): Farrell, Amy, Vanessa Bouché, and Dana Wolfe

Publication year: 2019

Summary: “Analysis of state legislative frameworks confirms that states are in fact more likely to utilize new human trafficking offenses to hold offenders accountable when state laws encourage proactive approaches to the investigation of human trafficking cases by supporting enhanced investigative techniques such as wiretapping or through prosecutorial tools that keep victims engaged in the criminal justice process.”

Abstract: “Since 2003, state legislatures in the United States have been active in passing legislation aimed at combating human trafficking. To date, all states have passed laws that criminalize acts of human trafficking, though with significant variation in the penalty structure and associated legal provisions. This article examines what aspects of state human trafficking laws are most impactful at increasing the arrest and prosecution of human trafficking suspects. Using panel data on state laws and associated enforcement actions from 2003 to 2012, this study confirms that more comprehensive state laws that invest in anti-trafficking resources are most strongly associated with human trafficking arrests and prosecutions. States that make legislative provisions for victim assistance, law enforcement training, statutory task forces, and mandatory reporting have higher anti-trafficking criminal enforcement. The political environment in which state human trafficking laws are enacted also influences their enforcement.”

Identifying Effective Counter-Trafficking Programs and Practices in the U.S.: Legislative, Legal, and Public Opinion Strategies that Work

Author(s): Bouché, Vanessa, Amy Farrell, and Dana Wittmer

Publication year: 2016

Summary: “Three main implications emerge. First, there is a need to educate the public about a wider array of human trafficking experiences. Second, there is a specific need for public awareness campaigns directed toward reticent groups.... Third, the public has not made the connection between how their own attitudes and behaviors can either help or hinder the movement against human trafficking.”

Abstract: “After more than a decade of sustained efforts to combat human trafficking in the United States, it is necessary to step back and examine the effectiveness of key anti-trafficking strategies. Utilizing a multi-method approach, we examine 1) the effectiveness of state-level human trafficking legislation to determine what specific legislative provisions are most effective for obtaining desired outcomes, 2) the characteristics of state prosecutions for human trafficking offenses to determine how state laws are being used to hold offenders accountable, and 3) what the public knows about human trafficking, why the public holds the beliefs that they do, and what the public expects from government anti-trafficking efforts. Together the three parts of the study inform efforts to develop effective counter-trafficking programs and practices for legislators, law enforcement, the courts, anti-trafficking agencies, and the public.”

Miscellaneous Resources

Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children and Adolescents: A Narrative Review

Author(s): Barnert, Elizabeth, Zarah Iqbal, Janine Bruce, Arash Anoshiravani, Gauri Kolhatkar, and Jordan Greenbaum

Publication year: 2017

Summary: “Although research into the prevention, identification, and response to commercially sexually exploited and sex trafficked children is increasing, there is still a large gap in the literature and further research and study is imperative.”

Abstract: “The researchers delve into the literature available on the topic of commercially sexually exploited and sex trafficked children. They identify that such children have a myriad of “clinical risk factors and high rates of unmet physical and mental health needs” associated with their exploitation. Due to the various medical concerns, current literature highly recommends a trauma-informed approach, in order to provide services to the victims in a way that will not re-traumatize them. While research in this area is expanding, there are still significant gaps. Medical professionals, particularly those in the field of pediatrics, should be trained to both identify and respond to CSE and sex trafficked youth. It is in this particular area that the research is both most needed and most lacking.”

